



SPIRIT OF 2012
INVESTING IN HAPPINESS

Volunteering Cities

A grant funding opportunity for UK City of Culture 2025 applicants



Grant funding opportunity
Information Pack

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Introduction

This funding round will support up to 3 bidding Cities of Culture to develop their volunteering infrastructure in their local area, regardless of their success in their bid to become UK City of Culture 2025.

The three successful proposals will each be awarded up to £200,000 and can bid for up to an additional £50,000 for access costs. Successful projects will begin in summer 2022 and should last between two and two and a half years, with all grant funding spent by end of March 2025. The purpose of each project should be:

- To build or strengthen the existing volunteering infrastructure in your location, with a clear plan for how this will be delivered over the long term after Spirit of 2012 funding ceases.
- To identify and engage a cohort of new volunteers who stand to benefit from volunteering with the project and measure its impact on them.

This funding opportunity's design builds on learning and research from Spirit of 2012 funding of Hull Volunteers and other event volunteer projects, and on the experience of other UK City of Culture bidding locations.

Background

Spirit of 2012 (Spirit) is the legacy funder of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, founded in 2013 with a £47m National Lottery endowment. We exist to unlock a future where events and volunteering are a pathway to wellbeing for all people and their communities.

We have awarded funding to projects around the UK, with a keen focus on measuring, evaluating and learning how to inspire the same wellbeing in communities that the Games did. As a spend-out trust, our intention is to commit our existing National Lottery Funds by the end of 2022 and spend down by the end of 2026.

We know that big events like the Olympics, Paralympics, Cities of Culture or milestone anniversaries such as the Queen's Jubilee are powerful moments in time. As an organisation born out of a large-scale event that brought people together from across difference, that celebrated diversity, and which galvanised an army of volunteers, we strongly believe that events can strengthen social connections and increase civic pride.

At the heart of our purpose sits effective event volunteering projects, which support long term social impacts and can be a route to regular volunteering. Our funding of Hull

Volunteers since their beginnings as a UK City of Culture volunteer offer, for example, has strengthened our understanding of how event volunteering initiatives can continue beyond the event itself, and the role that a strong, embedded, local partnership plays in its continued success.

We also know that the mere spark of an event – such as an initial bid to become UK City of Culture – can lead to positive social impact even when that event does not happen. Many locations that submitted expressions of interest to become the next UK City of Culture will have planned for local volunteers to support the running of the year, with mutual benefits for the community and for the economy. We want to explore how investment in the volunteering infrastructure can support a location to realise its vision for 2025, regardless of whether it is awarded the designation.

Spirit would like to support up to three locations that were inspired to bid for the 2025 UK City of Culture competition to build volunteer offers that serve the local community and drive community benefit.

About the funding opportunity

This funding round is designed to build on the evidence from Cities of Culture volunteering and other major events, and on Spirit's existing research and evidence on effective, inclusive, and sustainable volunteering offers. Our evidence includes a Rapid Evidence Assessment carried out by the What Works Centre for Wellbeing on [the link between volunteering and wellbeing benefits](#), and current [research grants](#) on developing inclusive volunteering to enable disabled and non-disabled people to participate as equals.

What do we mean by a volunteer project?

Local volunteer projects take many shapes and the opportunities available will be informed by the local context. Schemes generally should provide a support package of regular training and networking, and offer regular shifts with meaningful roles for volunteers. Our learning from previous projects suggests that volunteers become more engaged the easier it is to volunteer, and that varied and rewarding opportunities support sustained commitment.

Applicants must have support from the local authority, local enterprise partnership, and/or local volunteer infrastructure organisation as part of their application. You should also have strong connections to and agreements with at least some of the local voluntary sector organisations that your project is likely to deploy volunteers to.

For example, during 2017 Hull Volunteers were assigned shifts that supported cultural events and activities throughout the City of Culture year. Once the year ended Hull Volunteers continued to support events and charitable activities in the city beyond arts and culture, and the programme is now run by Hull City Council and the Visit Hull and East Yorkshire Tourism Partnership. Volunteers put themselves forward for shifts online, and regularly attend training, masterclasses and events which recognise their contribution to the community.

Scope

This funding round is open to the 20 locations that submitted an expression of interest to DCMS to become the UK's next City of Culture in 2025. Through a two-stage application process Spirit of 2012 will award up to £200,000 (plus up to an additional £50,000 for access costs) to three of these locations to develop their volunteering infrastructure, building on the momentum of their bid to become the next UK City of Culture to create an effective and inclusive local volunteer offer. Successful projects will present a compelling plan for a volunteer project that either builds a new – or strengthens an existing – volunteer offer.

Successful applicants will have between 2 and 2.5 years to complete their project.

The maximum main grant for each successful proposal will be £200,000. As an indication the main grant may be spent on a range of project costs, including staff to run the project, partnership administration costs, DBS checks, training programmes, evaluation costs and a proportion of overheads. Please see the Frequently Asked Questions at the end of this pack for more information on what you can and cannot spend grant funding on.

In addition, applicants may bid for up to an additional £50,000 to be spent on improving access to your volunteer project. This funding must be allocated to making your delivery more inclusive (e.g. so that disabled and non-disabled people may volunteer together as equals) and to enable those who face the greatest barriers to volunteering to take part.





Applications must be submitted by, or have written support from, an established local body, such as Local Authority and/or local volunteering body. Partnership applications are welcome, as long as you identify a lead, accountable organisation. The grant recipient will demonstrate a commitment to seeing the project through to completion regardless of the outcome of the 2025 City of Culture competition.

What do we want to learn?

Outcomes and learning programme (all projects):

We want to expand the knowledge base on what makes an effective, locally owned, inclusive volunteer project, with or without the investment and infrastructure that comes with the UK City of Culture designation. To do this Spirit will commission a joint evaluation across the three grants by an external research partner, with projects feeding their emerging insights into the evaluation over the course of the funding.


Research questions addressed by this commissioned evaluation will be refined in consultation but are likely to include:

-  Does volunteering make people happy, or do happy people volunteer?
-  What are the ingredients that actively enable and drive genuinely inclusive volunteering projects?
-  What role does volunteering play in culture-led regeneration or 'Levelling Up' more broadly?
-  What role, if any, does the bidding process for City of Culture play in improving volunteering infrastructure?

Spirit will also convene a learning partnership who will steer the evaluation, comprising of individuals who have led or been involved in similar volunteering projects in the past. Spirit will also organise regular learning days for projects to come together and share insights and challenges – bidders should factor the costs for attending up to 3 learning days in your project budget, each to take place in a project location.

Individual project outcomes and learning themes:

At a project level we are interested in understanding the impact of each project on the volunteers themselves, on the wider community, and on the location's capacity and readiness to deploy volunteers for local benefit. Although Spirit will commission an overarching evaluation across the three projects, applicants should allocate a proportion of their main grant to funding project-specific evaluations, to understand progress and impact in a local context, and apply "in-flight" learning to delivery plans. Successful projects will be required to evaluate progress and impact against the following themes:

-  **Wellbeing:** Projects will identify a proportion of participants for whom volunteering is a pathway to wellbeing, skills development or employment, and track the outcomes for these individuals across their involvement in the project. Projects will address wellbeing using ONS wellbeing measures, and the ONS

loneliness measure, as indicators. Indicator questions are shown in the FAQs below.

-  **Inclusivity:** We will also ask each project to critically evaluate how successfully they are able to deliver an inclusive volunteering project, including understanding the effectiveness of deploying access funding.
-  **Infrastructure and partnership:** Based on the specific needs and circumstances of your location we will ask you to identify suitable key performance indicators (KPIs) and longer-term outcomes to measure the suitability and effectiveness of the volunteer infrastructure you build over the life of the funding. KPIs may be linked to diversifying recruitment, building placement pathways for volunteers, building cross sector partnerships, etc.
-  **Scalability:** We will ask projects to regularly consider next steps for their volunteer project and outline a strategy for the project beyond 2024/25 that they will measure progress against over the course of Spirit's funding.
-  **The role of events:** Finally, we will ask each project to analyse the role of events within their volunteering project, including if and how the City of Culture bidding process made a difference to volunteering in their local area.

At full application stage, applicants will outline their plans for data collection, including their approach to baselining and following up.

What is the timescale?

The delivery period for projects will be from 1 September 2022, and projects will run for a minimum of 2 years, maximum of 2.5 years to 31 March 2025 at the latest. We anticipate projects will require a significant planning period before beginning delivery, but we encourage some testing of approaches and trialling of volunteer activities in the first 6 months.

The application timeline will run as follows:

Milestones	When
Volunteering funding round opens	6 December 2021
Webinar to meet Spirit, ask questions and hear from other volunteering project leads in other cities	January 2022
Expression of Interest deadline	18 March 2022
Up to five successful Expressions of Interest invited to full application	1 April 2022
Full application deadline	3 June 2022

Applicants notified of outcome	By 15 July 2022
Projects begin	By 1 September 2022
Grants run for a minimum of 2, or maximum of 2.5 years, and finish	By 31 March 2025

What is the assessment process?

Expression of Interest (Stage 1)

Expressions of Interest will be a short application form. At Expression of Interest stage we will be assessing:

- 🎨 Your understanding of the volunteering landscape in your city/ locality, and what needs to be improved or strengthened
- 🎨 Your vision for volunteering in your city/location and any plans to work in partnership with local community stakeholders (local authority, community and volunteer organisations, individuals, etc.) to achieve it
- 🎨 Who you are seeking to engage with your volunteering programme and how you think they will benefit
- 🎨 The role that the UK City of Culture programme will play, or has played, in the project's development
- 🎨 A short, indicative project budget.

At this stage we will also conduct informal due diligence checks on your organisation or partnership based on publicly available information (Charity Commission, Companies House, organisation websites, etc.).

Expressions of interest will be assessed by Spirit's Executive Team, and we will invite a maximum of five of the highest-scoring applicants to submit a full, stage 2 application.

Full application (Stage 2)

After initial expressions of interest, up to five applicants will be invited to submit more detailed proposals in a full application, which will be assessed by Spirit's Executive Team against published assessment criteria. The Executive Team will make a recommendation to Spirit's Board in July 2022 based on the outcomes of these assessments.

At Stage 2 we will ask you to submit a full application form alongside the following:

- 🎨 Project plan
- 🎨 Project Budget
- 🎨 Monitoring and Evaluation Framework
- 🎨 Risk register
- 🎨 Most up-to-date audited accounts (or equivalent)
- 🎨 A copy of your safeguarding policy

At Stage 2 you will be asked to expand on your expression of interest, and provide more information on:

- 🎨 How your plans will change if you are not awarded UK City of Culture 2025 (for those still in the running for the designation)
- 🎨 How you will sustain and embed the volunteer project in your location in the long run
- 🎨 Your rationale and plans to work with local partners, to include any partnership agreements or MOUs
- 🎨 Plans for your access funding, and how you intend to meaningfully involve people who face multiple barriers to participation
- 🎨 How you will evaluate the impact of your project against the fund outcomes, and against KPIs identified by you in the local context.

At both stages, if multiple applications are given the same high score we will preference those applications that have the strongest fit with Spirit's work, and which present the greatest opportunities to fill evidence gaps linked to Spirit's strategy.

How to apply

If you wish to apply please complete the Expression of Interest form and return to eibhlish.fleming@spiritof2012.org.uk by **5pm on Friday 18 March 2022**.

You can contact **Eibhlish Fleming, Grant & Learning Manager** at the above email with any queries or questions you may have.

Frequently asked questions

Who can apply for this grant?

To apply for this grant, the lead applicant must be a registered charity, community interest company, local authority or not-for-profit organisation. We can fund profit-making organisations as long as this grant does not contribute to profit-making activity.

Do we need to work in partnership?

We believe that partnership working will be essential to the success of these projects. Local partnerships provide an opportunity to broaden the skills and understanding available to your volunteering plans and to be supported in diversifying your volunteer pool. We will expect to see a clear breakdown of roles and responsibilities between the partners at full application, with the lead partner responsible for the overall delivery, financial management and reporting to Spirit of 2012. At Expression of Interest stage, we require an outline of who you intend to work with, and this can be firmed up and changed at full application stage.

What can we spend the grant on?

Spirit **can fund**:

- ✚ **salaries** of posts, or part posts of staff who are directly involved in delivering your project, including proportions of senior management, engagement and communications costs.
 - These should be proportionate to the activities delivered and size of grant.
- ✚ **Monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL)**, and you should allocate a minimum of 5% and up to 10% of your budget to this.
 - We recommend allocating at least some of this to internal staff resource to encourage you to support your staff to carry out MEL and to make sure they are curious and engaged about the impact of the project they are delivering. You may use funding to engage an external evaluator.
- ✚ A **ring-fenced 'access pot' of up to £50,000** to ensure your project is inclusive to all disabled and non-disabled participants. This pot must be allocated to costs that enable you to break down barriers to volunteering for those who need it, in addition to any direct delivery costs identified in your project activities.

Spirit **cannot fund**:

- ✚ **capital** projects, but you may allocate up to 10% of your budget to the costs of necessary project equipment,
- ✚ **curriculum** time activity in school,
- ✚ any activity that promotes party **politics** or **religion**, or projects that include the cost of looking after **animals**.

What are the ONS wellbeing and loneliness measures?

All projects will be required to use the following indicators to measure the wellbeing of participants at baseline, and at agreed points in the delivery of your project:

ONS4 Subjective Wellbeing Measures	
Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?	(On a scale, where 0 is not satisfied and 10 is completely satisfied)
Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are worthwhile?	(On a scale, where 0 is not at all worthwhile and 10 is completely worthwhile)
Overall, how happy did you feel yesterday?	(On a scale, where 0 is not at all happy and 10 is completely happy)
Overall, how anxious did you feel yesterday? <i>(over 16s only)</i>	(On a scale, where 0 is not anxious and 10 is completely anxious)
ONS Loneliness Measure	
How often do you feel lonely? (Some projects may choose to ask more than one question on this topic.)	(Often /always, Some of the time, Occasionally, Hardly ever, Never)

What do you mean by ‘inclusive’?

Championing genuine inclusion for disabled and non-disabled people is a strategic priority for Spirit. We fund projects that enable disabled and non-disabled people to participate, volunteer and lead together as equals. We promote the social model of disability, meaning that projects must address the barriers, attitudes, perceptions and self-perceptions which prevent disabled people and those with a range of impairments from having equal opportunities to participate. Applicants should consider using [Activity Alliance’s Talk to Me](#) principles to support their inclusive provision. Projects should also consider how they remove barriers to participation for those who face the greatest challenges to participation due to factors such as income, race, or faith.

